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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000614

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/20/2018
TAGS: PGOV PMIL PREL ASEC GV
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION LEADER SAYS END OF REGIME IS IMMINENT

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 B AND D

¶1. (S) SUMMARY. Opposition leader Sidya Toure told Poloff that the end of Conte's regime is imminent, whether through his death or a military takeover. In either case, he said he was certain that some sort of military transition is in Guinea's future. Sidya said he and other opposition party leaders are unofficially reaching out to junior military officers in order to make sure that they understand that such a transition must lead to democracy and elections. Several of Sidya's comments suggest that he may be well informed of a coup plot currently being organized by a core group of junior military officers. END SUMMARY.

OF THIS, I HAVE NO DOUBT

¶2. (S) Poloff met with UFR (Union Force Republican) opposition leader and former Prime Minister Sidya Toure on October 17. When asked about Guinea's current political situation, Sidya told Poloff &there are four things of which I have absolutely no doubt: Conte's regime is taking this country nowhere, Conte is in terrible health and the end of his regime is imminent, this government has no interest in organizing elections, and the military will ultimately take power.8

COUP MUST COME FROM THE INTELLECTUALS

¶3. (S) Despite his conviction that some type of military transition would emerge, Sidya said that the military is a worrisome institution at this point. He referred to May military mutiny leader Claude Pivi (aka Coplan) as a typical example of the undisciplined, poorly educated rank and file soldiers that have been recruited in recent years. He said that he has been supportive of the idea of a coup for some time, and was hoping for something similar to the coup in Mali. However, after the military mutiny, Sidya said he was talking with the former president of Mali, Konari, who he considers a close friend. According to Sidya, Konari told him that the level of education among the mutineers was low, and that a coup organized by such soldiers would be a very bad thing.

¶4. (S) Sidya told Poloff that a coup is still the best option. He said that transparent elections are unlikely in the current political climate, and that the constitutional process is no longer relevant. He added that a coup may not even be necessary if Conte should happen to die while in office, but that a military transition is a certainty. However, Sidya emphasized that a military transitional government require seasoned, disciplined officers. &We need people with education; we need the junior officers who are more intellectual.8 When asked if he had reached out to the military, Sidya said - officially no, but we are making

sure they understand what the transition needs to look like.⁸ Sidya said that although many people support the idea of a coup d'etat, they do not want another military regime.

DEMOCRACY MUST FOLLOW

15. (S) According to Sidya, opposition party leaders have been meeting behind closed doors to discuss an eventual transition. He emphasized that the government and the ruling party have not been informed of these meetings, the last of which was just held on October 16. &We have to make sure that the military understands exactly what needs to happen here,⁸ Sidya said. He added that he and others are advising the military that the international community will automatically condemn a coup. &The trick is for them to do the coup and then start turning things over to civilians as early as possible, and move towards organizing elections, in order to minimize international criticism; that is our message,⁸ Sidya said. &In addition, we need to make sure they understand that any military transition leader would be absolutely unacceptable as a political candidate when elections are finally organized,⁸ he added.

16. (S) In response to a question about youth activities in the civilian sector, Sidya said that the youths have the right idea, but are poorly positioned to achieve their objectives. He pointed out that there were twice as many deaths during the 2007 strikes in Guinea than there were during the 1991 military coup in Mali, but that Mali

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ultimately succeed where Guinea failed. Sidya said that civil demonstrations are not a viable solution, because some degree of force is necessary. &That is why we are talking to the young military officers,⁸ he said.

NEIGHBORS CONCERNED

17. (S) Sidya mentioned that he had recently talked with some of his close friends from Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire during Guinea's celebration of 50 years of independence, including several unnamed current and foreign ministers. According to Sidya, a Senegalese minister told him that Senegalese President Wade was deeply worried about the political situation in Guinea, and considered it &highly explosive.⁸ Sidya said that his Ivoirian contacts echoed the same sentiment.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

18. (S) Poloff emphasized that the U.S. Government would not support a coup d'etat, repeating comments made to Sidya in previous meetings. Sidya said &I know you cannot support a coup, but we hope that you can help us afterwards because that is when we are really going to need the help.⁸ Poloff told him that the USG is interested in supporting democracy and ultimately, elections in Guinea. Sidya replied, &exactly, we want the same thing.⁸

CHINESE REACHING OUT

19. (S) Before the meeting ended, Sidya mentioned that he and other key opposition party leaders had attended a meeting hosted by the Chinese Ambassador the evening of October 16. &It was the first time that the Chinese have ever expressed an interest in meeting with us,⁸ he said. According to Sidya, the Chinese economic and political assistants were

also present, although he said he expected they probably played a &different role8 within the Embassy. Sidya said that the Chinese were very interested in getting opposition leaders, perspective on Guinea's current political situation, and especially whether or not the current regime is likely to continue. &They were very preoccupied with what is going on, and it was unusual because they have never talked to us before,8 he told Poloff.

COMMENT

¶10. (S) As usual, Sidya was direct in his speech and seemed to speak freely, joking &I always tell you exactly what I am thinking.8 Sidya's advocacy for a coup is not new. He made it clear that he is not directly involved in any coup plot, but that he is communicating with those individuals who might be thinking about organizing one. The fact that several of his comments resonate closely with some that we have highlighted in more sensitive reporting suggests that Sidya is probably well informed of the current coup plot being organized by junior officers of the &19th promotion,8 and may even be communicating with select officers.

¶11. (S) The Chinese meeting with the opposition party leaders may be significant given that sensitive reporting has recently indicated that the Chinese may be very concerned about the current political situation. END COMMENT.

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